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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 001343

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: KARBALA: ANOTHER ATTACK ON A PRT CONTACT

REF: BAGHDAD 1238

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor John Fox for reason 1.4 (d).

¶1. (U) This is a PRT reporting cable.

¶2. (C) Summary. On May 18 a close PRT contact and leader of a local women's NGO was attacked by assailants seeking to punish her for her association with the United States. In addition to injuring the director and other women in the NGO, the perpetrators -- thought to be recently released Sadrists detainees -- destroyed computer and sewing equipment donated by the PRT. We have requested Iraqi Army (IA) support to find and detain the attackers. This marks the second attack against a close PRT contact in five weeks. End Summary.

¶3. (C) On the afternoon of May 18 several men entered the Al-Ghanemi Women's Association building in the village of Husayniyah (about a five-minute walk from the PRT's Forward Operating Base). According to Fawzia al-Ghanemi, the director, the men proceeded to severely beat and verbally abuse the women in the building, accusing them of aiding American forces. (The PRT had walked to the NGO on May 17 to purchase handiwork from the women. Team Members also played an impromptu soccer game outside the NGO with neighborhood children.) The assailants also destroyed several computers and sewing-machines donated by the PRT. Fawzia told us that on the same day her husband's uncle (at a separate location) was also attacked and stabbed multiple times. She had seen the attackers on May 17 observing the PRT visit and believes them to be recently released Sadrists detainees.

¶4. (C) Fawzia is a prominent leader in Husayniyah and is well-known within the NGO community in Karbala for her work on women's issues. In the January 31 elections she received over 2,500 votes -- more than the combined total of all of the eight women who won seats on the Provincial Council. (Since she was not on a winning list so her vote total was rendered irrelevant.) She has also been a close contact of the PRT since our move here in May 2008, and prior to that provided U.S. forces with information on insurgent activity in the area.

¶5. (C) The PRT, working through the 33rd Military Training Team (MITT) has requested IA support in identifying and detaining the perpetrators of the attack, as well as increasing patrols in Husayniyah. (Fawzia is related to Major General Uthman al-Ghanemi, commander of the IA 8th Division, which includes Karbala Province within its jurisdiction. This may elevate the profile of the incident.) Fawzia has requested that the PRT make a visit soon to assess the damage.

¶6. (C) Comment: This marks the second attack in five weeks against a close PRT contact. On April 13, the wife and son of one of our locally employed staff members were kidnapped and held briefly. The wife also was raped. Although the general level of crime has been rising in Karbala (reftel), these attacks were targeted at individuals seen to be closely associated with the PRT. We do not have enough information to say whether this presages a broader effort by local

radical militia elements against the PRT and coalition forces, or are simply isolated acts of extremism. End comment.

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